

SOUTH AMERICA ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND HEALTH NEWSLETTER

'Nuclear tribunal' proposed at international summit

146th issue, April 19, 2010

The Netherlands has played a peculiar role in the history of nuclear security, a topic that has brought 48 heads of state and government together in Washington this week.

In the 1970s, the Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan learnt what he needed to know about nuclear technology working for a Dutch company. He went on to help his native Pakistan develop its nuclear weapons. The know-how Khan supplied finally ended up in North-Korean and Iranian hands, countries that have or want to develop nuclear weapons of their own.

Still, the Dutch prime minister, Jan Peter Balkenende, seemed satisfied after the first day of the nuclear conference in the US capital, where he proposed creating a special tribunal in the Hague, "the judicial capital of the world", to prosecute "nations that supply terrorists with nuclear secrets or material"

Read more at http://www.nrc.nl/international/article2524671.ece/Nuclear_tribunal_proposed_at_international_summit

Floods in South America

In **Peru**, widespread flooding and numerous landslides due to recent heavy rains in three departments have resulted in 30 deaths and 54 injuries. More than 139,000 people have been affected since December 2009. One health center was affected in the department of Ancash. The regional and local governments of Huánuco have been coordinating with the National Civil Defense Institute to provide humanitarian aid and conduct damage assessments.

In **Brazil**, record-high levels of rainfall began on April 5 in the state of Rio de Janeiro, resulting in flash floods and mudslides. 192 deaths have been reported and over 3,200 people have

Read more at http://new.paho.org/disasters/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1143&Itemid=1

Peru: Regional agro-forestry event

REO Specialist, Esteban Sandoval, participated in a Workshop entitled "Initiatives to Reduce Deforestation in the Andean Amazon Region" held on April 9, 2010. The event provided an opportunity to introduce the REALU (Reductions of Emissions from Agricultural Land Use) Project being implemented by the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) -- <http://www.worldagroforestry.org/>. ICRAF is an international organization part of an alliance of research centers around the globe. The ASB —Partnership for the Tropical Forest Margins-- is a global partnership of more than 80 research institutes and organizations across the world that started working 10 years ago with the aim of presenting sustainable options for agriculture. One of the main partners in Peru is INIA (Institute of Agrarian Innovation, part of the Ministry of Agriculture) working with a network of research institutions across the region.

With the REALU initiative the aim is to include other landscapes that can store carbon such as agroforestry. This approach will strengthen the abilities of developing countries to develop and implement effective strategies to reduce deforestation. Some of the activities performed so far within this project, include an analysis of land use change in the margins of tropical forests, of regulation, rights and responsibilities as well as REDD's value chain. There are 4 main principles on the approach: REDD, Repeat, Restock and REAG (Carbon emission reduction from Agriculture). Agroforestry is considered as a viable option to sustainable increase the carbon stock for some countries, mainly on forestry land used for agricultural means. This is why, it is an interesting initiative to be developed at the Andean Amazon level. The REALU initiative has already been implemented in managing stocks in Indonesia, Nepal, India, China, and now Peru.

Colombia: Thick-Shelled Turtle Species Lived With World's Biggest Snake, Reveals Fossil Found in Columbian Coal Mine

Correjonemys wayuunaiki takes its genus name from Correjón, and emys -- Greek for turtle. Its species name is the language spoken by the Wayuu people who live on the Guajira Peninsula in northeastern Colombia near the mine.

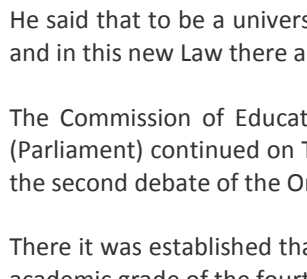
About as thick as a standard dictionary, this turtle's shell may have warded off attacks by the Titanoboa, thought to have been the world's biggest snake, and by other, crocodile-like creatures living in its neighborhood 60 million years ago.

"The fossils from Correjón provide a snapshot of the first modern rainforest in South America -- after the big Cretaceous extinctions and before the Andes rose, modern river basins formed and the Panama land bridge connected North and South America," explains Carlos Jaramillo, staff scientist at the Smithsonian who studies the plants from Correjón.

"We are still trying to understand why six of this turtle's modern relatives live in the Amazon, Orinoco and Magdalena river basins of South America and one lives in Madagascar," explains Edwin Cadena, first author of the study and a doctoral candidate at North Carolina State University. "It closes an important gap in the fossil record and supports the idea that the group originated near the tip of South America before the continent separated from India and Madagascar more than 90 million years ago."

Read more at <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/04/100406133714.htm>

Global warming played a role in Incas' rise, report says



Beginning about 1150, the climate began warming and eventually got "several degrees centigrade" warmer, Chepstow-Lusty said. That had the net effect of extending arable regions to an altitude about 300 yards higher in the mountains, he suggested, vastly extending the area that could be cultivated. It also might have caused the Peruvian glaciers to melt slowly, providing water that the Incas captured with large irrigation systems and agricultural terraces.

A several-degree increase in temperature allowed the Incas to move higher into the Andes mountains, opening up new farmland and providing a water source through the gradual melting of glaciers at the top of those mountains, paleoecologist Alex Chepstow-Lusty of the French Institute of Andean Studies in Lima reported online Monday in the journal *Climate of the Past*.

"They were highly organized and they had a sophisticated [governance], but it wouldn't have counted a jot without being underpinned by the warming of the climate," he said in a telephone interview.

Other experts were cautious about his interpretation. "The premise that the Incan expansion was driven by climate change is quite revolutionary," said archaeologist Mark Bush of the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne.

Confirming it will require a great deal more work for paleoecologists and archaeologists alike.

The new research is important because "data on Andean climate during this time period are scant," said archaeologist Warren Church of Columbus State University in Georgia, who works in Peru. "However, it is important to remember that climates do not make empires. People do."

Read more at <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jul/28/science/sci-inca28>

Ecuador: Correa for Transforming Higher Education

"It is necessary to change Higher Education," affirmed Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa, in his Saturday recount to citizens, on this occasion from Jipijapa, Manabí province.

The President said it is important to pass a new Law that transforms higher education and imposes high academic standards as well as formation for professors.

"Here anyone thinks he can be a university professor. To teach a university subject in a developed country they need at least, 16 credits of postgraduate courses in the subject, that is about four postgraduate courses," he added.

On the contrary anyone graduates here and begins to repeat badly what he learned badly. I did so, I graduated and began to teach a subject, economic dynamics and now I am embarrassed of the silly things I said. One thought one knew," he said.

He said that to be a university professor you need to be a specialist in the subject you teach and in this new Law there are academic requirements to be a university professor.

The Commission of Education, Culture, Science and Technology of the National Assembly (Parliament) continued on Thursday to approve the articles of the Law to render a report for the second debate of the Organic Law on Higher Education.

There it was established that to be rector or rectoress of a university, a professional title and academic grade of the fourth level, equal to master, doctorate, PhD or its equivalent.

According to Correa, the main problem for this Law to be passed is not in the academia part but in the political one, "because rectors want to decide for themselves so no one controls them and there is where the Law would not serve its purpose, there is the struggle."

Read more at <http://www.insidecostarica.com/dailynews/2010/april/18/latinamerica10041802.htm>

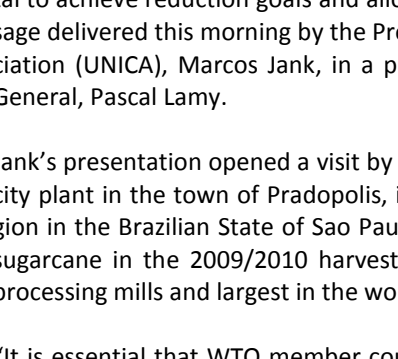
Brazil to Create 10 Million Hectares of Protected Areas

In a meeting with the presidents of parliaments of Norway, Dag Andersen Tarja and the Sami People, Egil Olli, the Environment Minister, Izabella Teixeira, said on Monday (12/04) that actions such as the Amazon Fund may show the world that Brazil is able to make good on its commitment and reduce deforestation in the Amazon rainforest.

She told the Norwegian delegation that the Amazon Regional Protected Areas Program (ARPA) is part of Brazil's strategy to create new conservation units (UCs). She added that 10 million hectares of conserved area will be created in the Amazon in the next 10 years, in the second phase of ARPA. Brazil was responsible for creating 70% of all conservation units created in the world for the past seven years. According to the minister, the Amazon Fund is the basis for the implementation of ARPA.

Read more at <http://www.mma.gov.br/sitio/index.php?ido=ascom.noticiaMMA&idEstrutura=8&codigo=5717>

Peru: Solar-Fueled Pasteurization



In Cusco, the group will also try to help connect farmers with steady local customers such as restaurants and hotels, and start laying plans to create and construct a dairy cooperative that will serve as a local advocate and education center for Peruvian artisan cheese makers.

Read more at <http://green.rpi.edu/archives/esw/index2.html>

Several ESW members will return to Peru this summer, to continue their work on designing and creating a solar-powered milk pasteurization system for communities in the country's rural south.

The project kicked off in 2007 under the leadership of former Rensselaer Professor Lupita Montoya, and aims to help the Langui and Canas communities in southern Peru by developing affordable, solar-powered pasteurization equipment. Many families in the region have dairy cows and produce milk, yogurt, and cheeses on a small scale, but cannot obtain certification to market these products because they lack proper sanitation equipment. The new pasteurization systems will allow these families to meet governmental regulations so that they can begin to sell their dairy products and earn additional income. In addition to solar power, ESW members are investigating how to create and use a "biogas," which converts dung and other waste into biogas, as another means to power the pasteurization system.

Brazil Court Strikes Down Belo Monte Dam Tender Injunction

A Brazilian court struck down an injunction halting a tender auction for the controversial Belo Monte hydroelectric dam project, the Brazilian attorney general's office said Friday.

The federal court reversed a decision made late Thursday by Judge Antonio Almeida Campel, who halted the tender process for the dam and suspended a preliminary license issued for the site. The government had appealed Campel's decision early Friday.

The legal tussle was the latest hurdle for the Belo Monte dam, which will be built on the Xingu River in the environmentally fragile Amazon region. The dam has become a cause celebre among environmental activists because it will force the relocation of indigenous tribes who live on the banks of the Xingu.

Read more at <http://www.foxbusiness.com/story/markets/industries/utilities/brazil-court-strikes-belo-monte-dam-tender-injunction/>



Danger of Trade Barriers for Renewable Fuels Highlighted During WTO Director-General's Visit to Ethanol Mill in Brazil

It makes no sense for countries to adopt ambitious policies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, while continuing to apply high tariffs on clean technologies that can be instrumental to achieve reduction goals and allowing fossil fuels to be traded freely. That was a key message delivered this morning by the President and CEO of the Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association (UNICA), Marcos Jank, in a presentation to the World Trade Organization's Director-General, Pascal Lamy.

Jank's presentation opened a visit by Lamy to the Sao Martinho sugar, ethanol and bioelectricity plant in the town of Pradopolis, in the heart of the world's largest sugarcane growing region in the Brazilian State of Sao Paulo. The Sao Martinho plant processed 8.1 million tons of sugarcane in the 2009/2010 harvest season, making it the largest among Brazil's 430 cane processing mills and largest in the world.

"It is essential that WTO member countries reconcile their trade and climate change policies, and that we progress toward the inclusion of ethanol in the list of environmental goods for which import tariffs must be abolished," said Jank, as he argued that ethanol must be recognized as a global energy commodity. To achieve that, UNICA defends that the customs classification for ethanol should be changed, in order to reflect its growing importance as a low-carbon energy solution.

The proliferation of proposals for legally binding criteria, developed by institutions and individual countries to ensure that goods are sustainably produced and don't add to climate change, was also raised during Jank's presentation. "This might well become a challenge for WTO rules. Sustainability must be a given and we all want to ensure that it is always a vital consideration, but any binding criteria must be science based and measurable in practice. Otherwise, we will be opening doors to a serious risk of creating new trade barriers," he explained.

Read more at <http://chicagoexpressrelease.com/press-releases/danger-of-trade-barriers-for-renewable-fuels-highlighted-during-wto-director-generals-visit-to-ethanol-mill-in-brazil>

REO Hub and ESTH Outreach

May 3-7, 2010 LAC Economic Growth and Environment Strategic Planning Workshop - Panama City, Panama

May 10-12, 2010 XIX Annual Latin American Energy Conference, The La Jolla Conference - La Jolla, California

July 14-17, 2010 International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests – Quito, Ecuador

July, 2010 Roundtable on Climate Change and Disaster Preparation (dates to be confirmed)

Agoo 5-8, 2010 International Seminar on Science, organized by CEPRECYT and INICTEL-UNI – Lima, Peru

Agoo 5-8, 2010 IX International Meeting on Science –Lima, Peru

Oct 4-10, 2010 X Latin American Congress on Botany - La Serena, Chile

U.S. Climate Change Bills

HR 2996

Rep. Norman Dicks [D-WA6] – Dep. of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010

Oct 30, 2009 – Became Public Law No: 111-88. Read about this law here: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-2996>

S. 1733

Sen. John Kerry [D-MA] – Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act.

Sept 30, 2009 – Introduced (referred to Senate Environment and Public Works Committee)

Nov 5, 2009: Committee on Environment and Public Works. Ordered to be reported with an amendment in the nature of a substitute favorably.

Feb 2, 2010: Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders.

Track this bill here: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s111-1733>

HR 2454

Rep. Henry Waxman [D-CA30] – American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009.

May 15, 2009 – Introduced (referred to 15 different committees: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-2454&tab=committees>

May 21, 2009 – Reported by committee (2 proposed amendments: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-2454&tab=amendments>)

June 26, 2009 – Passed House. Bill now goes to Senate vote.

July 7, 2009 – Read the second time. Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders. Calendar No. 97. Track this bill here: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-2454>

The information contained herein was gathered from various sources from across the region, and the views expressed below do not necessarily reflect those of the Regional Environmental HUB Office or of our constituent posts.

Addressees interested in sharing any ESTH-related events of USG interest are welcome to do so. For questions or comments, please contact us at quevedoa@state.gov.